

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), Ranking Member**  
**Committee on Science & Technology**  
**Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight**

**The NASA Administrators' Speech to Office of Inspector General Staff, the**  
**Subsequent Destruction of Video Records, and Associated Matters**  
May 24, 2007

We are here today, in part, to reconstruct a meeting that we should have been able to watch. Congress relies on inspectors general as agency watchdogs to oversee the conduct at agencies. As such, we take allegations against inspectors general seriously. After a yearlong investigative and deliberative process, in which Congress was kept almost entirely in the dark, the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency (PCIE) forwarded its Investigative Committee's findings on NASA's Inspector General to NASA's Administrator, Michael Griffin. Administrator Griffin, in concert with NASA senior management, reviewed the findings and recommended that the Inspector General attend management training courses. He forwarded his recommendations to the Chairman of the PCIE, who adopted them. Administrator Griffin then scheduled a meeting on April 10 with staff from the office of the inspector general to explain his decision.

By several accounts, Administrator Griffin's April 10 meeting with the office of the inspector general further undermined the NASA Inspector General's independence. As one NASA employee told Committee staff after attending the meeting, "If there wasn't an appearance of independence before, there is now."

Given our reliance on inspectors general, Congress would have benefited from reviewing a tape of that meeting. It is therefore unfortunate that the tapes were destroyed, but hopefully, through testimony today, we can develop as accurate a picture of the meeting as possible.

Perhaps more unfortunately, we also need to understand why recordings of that meeting were destroyed. I believe in open government and I am very concerned to hear that a government employee was beating a videocassette with a plank and an Agency's General Counsel physically destroyed a stack of DVDs. The fact that these events happened at different locations across the country and the fact that no copies of the recorded meeting remain, suggest a coordinated effort to destroy all record of the event. This destruction also seems to have occurred with limited understanding of the applicable law and under full awareness that Congress was investigating this issue.

I believe that personnel decisions within the Administration should be handled by the Administration. As such, I support the decisions made by NASA, the PCIE, and the President. But those decisions need to be made transparently and they need to be made in a way that preserves confidence in the office of the inspector general and in our agencies' leadership. Hopefully, today's hearing will inspire that confidence.